A Late New Year’s Resolution

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No matter how long I have been in practice, treatment planning for those unusual and difficult cases still tax my clinical experience and creativity. As I review message boards on Orthotown.com, I find this dilemma is shared by many colleagues who post cases they are treatment planning in their offices. No matter how experienced you are, these posts prove you haven’t seen everything that could come in your office – yet! But your colleagues are seeing them.

Lately, cases posted on Orthotown.com have been very interesting and in some cases almost “bizarre.” Some of these cases are totally new to me even though, compared to most orthodontists, I am older than dirt. And the comments the poster receives about his or her case are very diverse and informative. Orthotown.com is such a great venue for asking for opinions (and help) about the treatment plan for your very special patient! And for a forum that operates, for the most part, in anonymity, the sincerity of all of the posts following each case is wonderful. I’d wager Orthotown.com has the best online forum for orthodontic professionals to turn to for assistance with our treatment planning issues by caring and sincere responders.

Last year Orthotown started the Virtual Study Club. (Side note: You can review the article I wrote in the February 2010 issue of Orthotown Magazine by going to the Orthotown.com home page and searching [at the top right corner of the page] for “Virtual Study Club” in “M magazine.”) The vision we have for this section of our Web site is to accumulate “completed” cases that can be reviewed by any certified orthodontist in the world who has access to Orthotown.com. As cases with pre-treatment records, progress records and final records are archived, this will become a library that can be accessed by orthodontists in all stages of proficiency.

Think about the new graduate who opens his office and, without warning, a case that he never saw in his residency walks into his office. What will he do? And for a forum that operates, for the most part, in anonymity, the sincerity of all of the posts following each case is wonderful. I’d wager Orthotown.com has the best online forum for orthodontic professionals to turn to for assistance with our treatment planning issues by caring and sincere responders.

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Think about the new graduate who opens his office and, without warning, a case that he never saw in his residency walks into his office. What will he do? We hope that, in time, a similar case will be in the archives of the Virtual Study Club to guide him in reviewing the case and then providing the best treatment possible for his “new” treatment planning problem.

Or consider the orthodontic residents who are approaching graduation who have not seen “all” the cases they need to be exposed to in order to go out on their own and be confident about the cases they will see in their office. As an instructor in an orthodontic residency, searching the database of the Virtual Study Club might offer me an opportunity to present a case to my residents which we haven’t seen in the clinic. What a great resource for teaching residents and assisting new graduates!

The success of this “vision” needs help from our participants on Orthotown.com. I am issuing a “call to action” to each of our regular posters to find one case they have treated with a nice finished result and post it in the Virtual Study Club section of the Web site. Perhaps it is a case on which you worked really hard, and got a better result than you expected. Pre- and post-treatment records are needed and if you have progress records (which we all should really be doing more of) that would make it perfect. If you are board certified, select one of the cases you presented to the ABO – one you are really proud of – and post the records that you used for your board presentation. It might take an hour or so of your time but look at the contribution you can make. Perhaps you support your ortho program (or would like to in some way). What better contribution could you make to the residents in your school and to the recent graduates from that program than to make your experience and expertise available to them through a simple series of clicks on their computer? In fact you would be making a contribution to all orthodontic schools and their recent graduates, worldwide!

I encourage you to make a late New Year’s resolution to follow through with my call to action as soon as you can. It is very simple to do. Just read my article mentioned above or click on the Virtual Study Club Video Tutorial on the home page of Orthotown.com for assistance. Of all your resolutions, this one has the potential to be of great value to your orthodontic colleagues, both new and experienced.